

**COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
HUMAN SERVICES FUNDING COMMITTEE
Fiscal Year 2004**

The Amherst Community Services Department provides a variety of services to Amherst families and the Amherst community. In addition to providing the community with childcare/early education information, especially regarding the availability of tuition assistance for low-income families, the Community Services Coordinator is also responsible for 1. administering Town appropriations to human service agencies, 2. providing emergency assistance to low-income individuals and families, using interest from the Alfred Field Charitable Trust Fund, 3. editing the Annual Town Report, 4. assessing community needs with respect to childcare and human services, 5. developing new programs that respond to community priorities, 6. working collaboratively with numerous committees and groups that provide important services to the Amherst community and 7. providing staff assistance to the Cable Advisory Committee, The Council on Youth and the Human Services Funding Committee. The Human Services Funding Committee reviews proposals for funding from human service agencies and makes funding recommendations to the Select Board, Finance Committee and Town Meeting.

Childcare/Early Childhood Education

Each year, the need for childcare and childcare tuition assistance continues to increase. Though there are several state programs that provide low-income families with financial assistance, available funds are not sufficient to meet community need. Low-income families with infants and toddlers face the greatest difficulty in obtaining financial support. The cost of full-time infant and toddler childcare now costs over \$10,000.00 per year; yet due to the financial crisis facing the state, there is little hope for an immediate solution. The Massachusetts Department of Education does, however, provide substantial funds for families with pre-school age children (over 2 years, 9 months of age). These funds also continue to be reduced as a result of the state financial crisis. The Amherst Early Childhood Community Partnership still receives almost \$300,000.00 to both provide tuition assistance to low-income families and to improve the quality of childcare programs.

This grant provides:

1. childcare and/or early childhood education tuition assistance for children from low-income families who are in need of social services, family support and/or parent education
2. childcare tuition assistance for low- and moderate-income working families with three- and four-year-old children
3. partial funding for the local Head Start program to operate one classroom for a full day, giving families who are receiving funds from the state Department of Transitional Assistance an opportunity to attend school or become gainfully employed
4. family support, case management and other services, as funds permit.

The Department of Education requires all childcare programs to:

1. receive accreditation from the National Association for Education of Young Children
2. provide parent education
3. provide staff with the opportunity to improve their teaching skills.

School-Age Childcare

Town Meeting allocated \$16,295.00 to provide tuition assistance for low- and moderate-income families with children attending school-based after-school childcare programs. During FY 04, twelve families received support for sixteen children attending these programs. These funds helped parents pay for childcare services while they continued to work or attend educational institutions.

Human Services:

The Human Services Funding Committee continues to face difficult decisions, as human service agencies continue to increase their requests for funds. The Committee's priorities for funding continue to follow the guidelines established by the Select Board, namely: 1. emergency services: survival or critical, 2. preventive services and 3. information and referral. Annual Town Meeting approved the following allocations, totaling \$133,700.00 for FY 05, in accordance with recommendations presented by the Human Services Funding Committee:

Amherst Survival Center	\$35,000.00
Family Outreach of Amherst	\$23,000.00
Not Bread Alone	\$ 6,000.00
Children's Aid and Family Services	\$ 8,000.00
Commuter Resources/Homesharing	\$ 1,200.00
Everywoman's Center	\$ 3,000.00
First Call for Help	\$ 4,000.00
Safe Passage	\$ 7,000.00
Men's Resource Center	\$ 5,000.00
Big Brother/Big Sister of Hampshire County	\$25,000.00
Amherst Family Center	\$ 2,000.00
Service Net/Interfaith Cot Program	\$ 5,000.00
Center for New Americans	\$ 4,500.00
Casa Latina Outreach	\$ 5,000.00

The Community Services Coordinator continued to participate in monthly meetings of the Amherst Human Service Network, a group of human service personnel concerned with the social service problems facing the Amherst community; the Early Childhood Community Partnership; the Hampshire County Family Network; the Hampshire Council of Social Agencies; the Strategic Planning Initiative for Families and Youth; the school-based substance abuse partnership and the Amherst Community Partnership to prevent substance abuse.

The Amherst Juvenile Diversion Project continues to operate as a program of the Center for Human Development, under the direction of Family Outreach of Amherst. This program

continues to be an effective model for services to at-risk youth; though no formal evaluation has been done, the Amherst Police Department and the Franklin Hampshire Probation Department both feel that participants in this program do not become further involved in the juvenile justice system.

During the spring of FY 03, the Executive Office of Public Safety issued a request for proposals to implement programs that have been nationally evaluated and shown to be effective in reducing juvenile delinquency. The Community Services Coordinator applied for \$42,000 to provide big brothers or big sisters for children from families experiencing domestic violence. The Department saw this as a way to continue to provide support for children and families experiencing domestic violence. During FY 04, the Community Services Department was notified that it would receive \$42,700.00 to work with Big Brother Big Sister of Hampshire County to provide the services described above.

During this fiscal year, the Coordinator was appointed the staff liaison to the newly appointed Council on Youth. Due to the length of time it took to make appropriate appointments, (which required representation from school administration, the Select Board and the School Committee), the Committee only met twice during FY 04. The Committee was able, however, to approve a final version of its formal charge.

The Coordinator was also appointed staff liaison to the Cable Advisory Committee. The CAC has begun the process of renegotiating a new contract with COMCAST as required by state and federal law.

CHARITABLE FUNDS

Requests for charitable funds continue to increase each year. The increased cost of rent, utilities, etc. makes it more difficult to serve all those in need.

TOWN REPORT

The FY 03 Town Report was completed and copies distributed to the Select Board, the Finance Committee, the Town Manager, department heads, the School Department and the Jones Library. The editors of Town Report thank members of the Information Technology Department for their help in printing the FY 03 Annual Town Report.

Roy Rosenblatt
Community Services Coordinator